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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2018
TAGS: PREL EG IZ
SUBJECT: MUBARAK WARNS AGAINST DEPARTURE OF U.S. FORCES
FROM IRAQ; ZEBARI SAYS BAGHDAD AND CAIRO TO EXCHANGE
AMBASSADORS

Classified By: ECPO Minister-Counselor William R. Stewart
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: President Mubarak told the Ambassador and
visiting Congressman Steven Israel (D-NY) on January 6 that
withdrawing American forces from Iraq now would be a "big,
big mistake." Separately, visiting Iraqi Foreign Minister
Zebari -- leaving his own, earlier meeting with Mubarak --
told the Ambassador that Egypt and Iraq would be exchanging
ambassadors soon. End summary.

¶2. (C) During the January 6 visit of the Ambassador and
Congressman Israel to President Mubarak's Sharm El Sheikh
retreat, Mubarak advised that the departure of American
forces from Iraq now would be a "big, big mistake" that would
lead inevitably to "a big, big mess." The United States will
be heavily criticized if it withdraws now from Iraq, Mubarak
stressed.

¶3. (C) Mubarak said that he had just met with visiting Iraqi
Foreign Minister Hosheyar Zebari, and had advised Zebari that
the Americans should not withdraw their forces from Iraq
until Iraqi forces are "ready to take over." Mubarak said
they had also discussed ways to improve economic and
political cooperation, and agreed to the visit of an Iraqi
delegation to Cairo soon to "sign an agreement."

¶4. (C) Just prior to meeting Mubarak, the Ambassador spoke
briefly with Zebari as he was leaving. Zebari told us that
he had had a very good meeting with Mubarak, who had agreed
to send "a delegation" to Baghdad to open an embassy. Zebari
added that Iraq planned to reciprocate and would soon assign
an ambassador to Cairo.

¶5. (U) Congressman Israel did not clear this message.
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